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Prison, parole & probation in Montana : a



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PAROLE & PROBATION
IN
MONTANA
A STUDY OF ADMISSIONS
OVER TIME

by
Gary H. Leonardson, PhD.

APRIL 1992

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DISCLAIMER

In October 1991, Dr. Gary Leonardson was contracted by the Montana Criminal Justice Statistical Analysis Center within the Montana Board of Crime Control to examine admission data from Montana State Penitentiary and the Department of Corrections and Human Services Probation and Parole Programs to detect whether or not any patterns or trends could be observed. This report is a summary of his findings.

Because of data entry errors in the original database and because some records were incomplete, the raw numbers and percentages reported here are slightly different than those previously published by the Department of Corrections and Human Services.

Should the reader desire more detailed information than is found in this monograph, a copy of Dr. Leonardson's report and the Montana Department of Corrections and Human Services, Corrections Division Report for Fiscal Years 1989-1991 is available upon request.

PRISON, PAROLE AND PROBATION IN MONTANA 1984-1991

The number of persons admitted to the prison, placed on parole and placed on probation in Montana has been increasing over time. The number of admissions to Montana State Prison has increased by 40% between 1984 and 1991. The number of parolees increased by 90.9% between 1986 and 1991, and those placed on probation increased by 37.8%.

Prison Admissions--Trends in the Composition

The major change in the composition of prison admissions over time has been in type of crime committed. There have been no major changes, however, with respect to sexual and racial composition over the last eight years.

Between 1984 and 1991, the proportion of persons admitted to Montana State Prison for drug crimes has doubled. In actual numbers, there were almost three times as many persons admitted for drug crimes in 1991 as there were in 1984. This is offset by a small decrease in the proportion of people sent there for property crimes and combination crimes¹. The proportion of people sent to prison for violent crimes has remained relatively constant over this period, making up roughly one-fourth of the admissions.

¹ Combination crimes refer to persons being sentenced for more than one of the following type crimes: violent, property, drugs.

When compared to the general population, Native Americans being admitted to prison are over-represented. The proportion of Native Americans going to prison has consistently stayed at about 15% over the last eight years. This is almost three times the percentage found in Montana's adult population. Native Americans represent the largest minority group in prison; the numbers for other groups² are so small that statistical analysis is difficult.

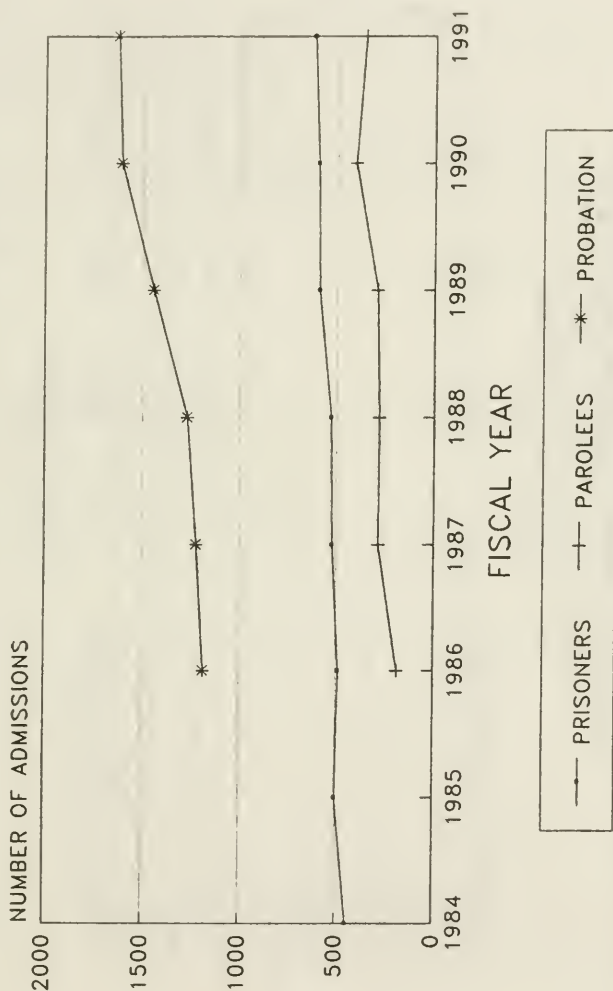
The sexual composition of prison females has also been relatively constant over the years. Although the proportion of females admitted to prison has climbed from 4.8% in 1984 to 8.7% in 1991, the increase is not statistically significant. The raw numbers, however, indicate a need for additional space for female prisoners. In 1991 42 females were admitted to prison while in 1984 there were 21. As a result of these increases, a new facility has been funded by the legislature.

The trends in the types of crimes being committed by sex alone parallel the overall change in the types of crimes seen in prison admissions. The change is not statistically significant for females, but this may be due the small numbers in the female sample.

When sex and race are analyzed together, some statistical differences begin to appear. A significantly higher proportion of Native American females are sentenced for violent crimes and for drug crimes than Whites. On the other hand, the proportion of White females admitted to prison for property crimes was significantly greater than Native American Females.

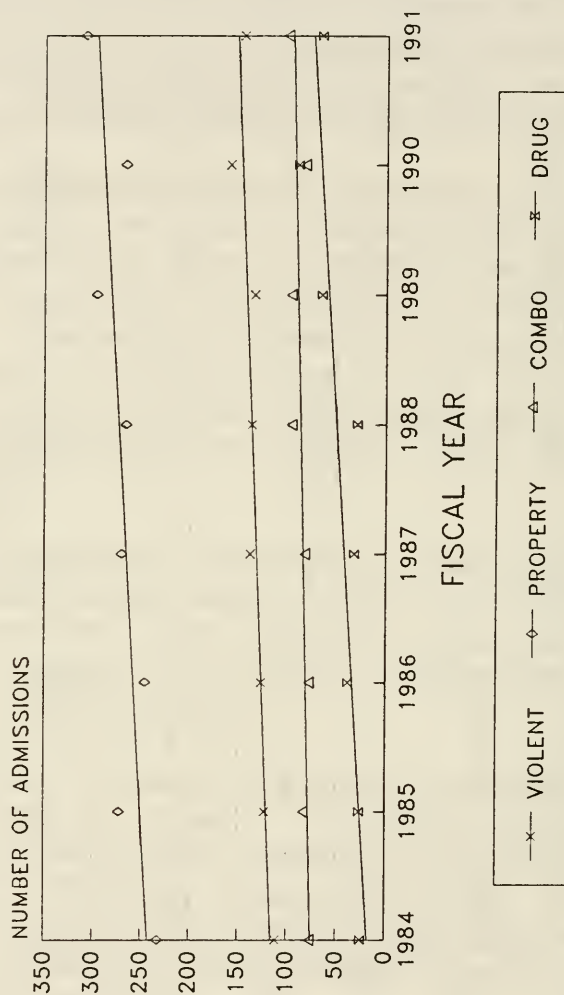
² Other races include blacks, hispanic, and mixed blood Native Americans.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PROGRAMS NUMBER OF CASES ADMITTED BY TYPE



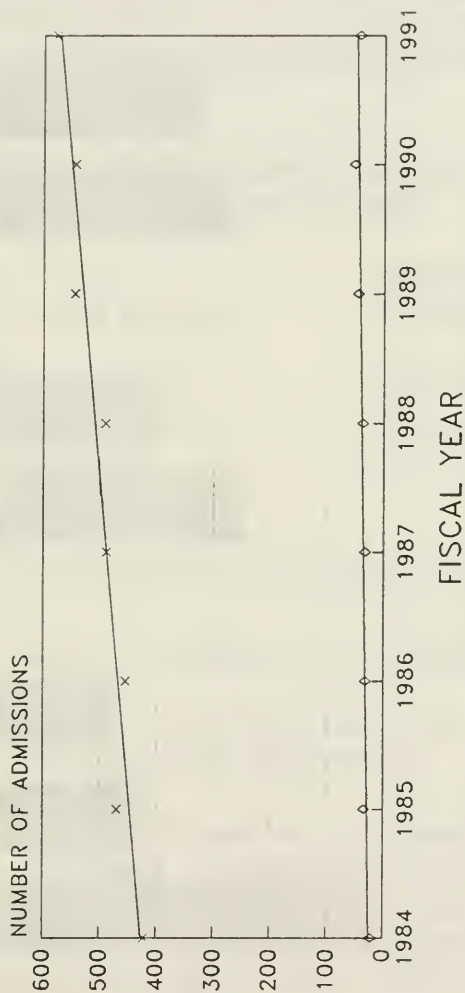
SOURCE: MT DEPT OF CORRECTIONS
& HUMAN SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PROGRAMS NUMBER OF CASES ADMITTED BY TYPE OF CRIME



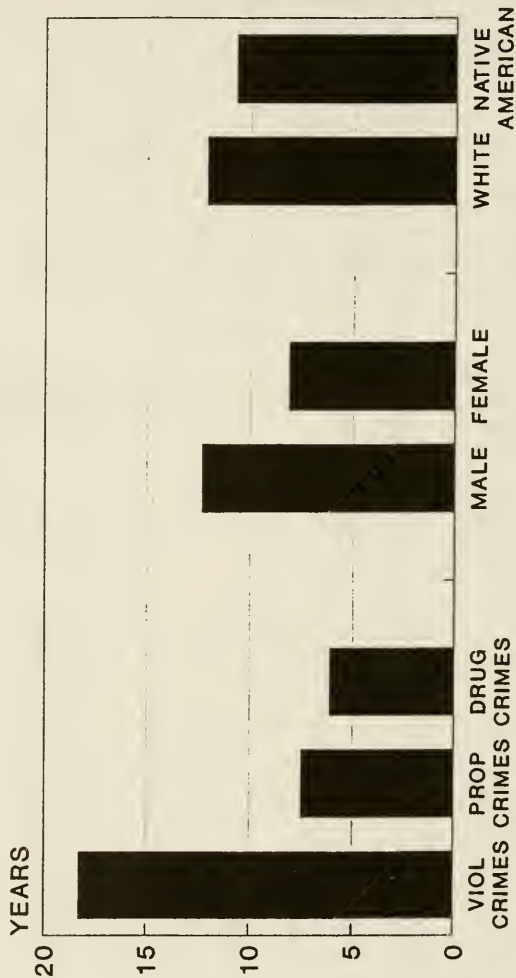
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& HUMAN SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PROGRAMS NUMBER OF CASES ADMITTED BY SEX



SOURCE: MT. DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS
& HUMAN SERVICES

AVERAGE NET SENTENCES TO MONTANA STATE PRISON FOR VARIOUS CLASSIFICATIONS



PRISONER CLASSIFICATION

SOURCE: FY1984-FY1991 DATA FROM
MT DEPT OF CORRECTIONS & HUMAN SERVICES

NET SENTENCES

Sentencing for common crimes has been relatively uniform over time. The Average Net sentence for the various crime groups are shown in Table 1. The overall average sentence length for drug crimes is statistically less than that for other crime categories.

**TABLE 1--Average Net Sentences
for Different Types of Crime**

TYPE OF CRIME	AVERAGE NET SENTENCE
Violent Crimes	18.29 Years
Property Crimes	7.47 Years
Drug Crimes	6.1 Years

With respect to net sentences other major findings are:

- 1) Females receive less years than males.
- 2) Divorced and widowed prisoners are given longer sentences than single persons.
- 3) Native Americans receive sentences similar to those of Whites. Although the sentences handed down to Native Americans are generally shorter than those given to Whites, the difference between their averages are not statistically significant³.

³ Although their numbers are small, Blacks and Native Americans with mixed blood were also found to have significantly longer average net sentences than Native Americans.

4) Age at admission and total convictions were found to be significantly correlated with net sentences, although the correlation coefficients in each case are quite low. In both cases the correlations are positive, indicating that if everything were equal and older person would probably receive a longer sentence than a younger person. Similarly, a person with prior convictions is apt to receive a longer sentence than one with no priors.

ADMISSIONS TO PAROLE

No trends over time (1986-1991) were observed in the composition of persons admitted to parole with respect to race and sex.

There was a significant relationship between fiscal year and the crime type for paroled males. The number of males placed on parole for drug crimes increased by nearly 100% between 1986 and 1991. During the same time, the number of persons paroled for combo crimes decreased.

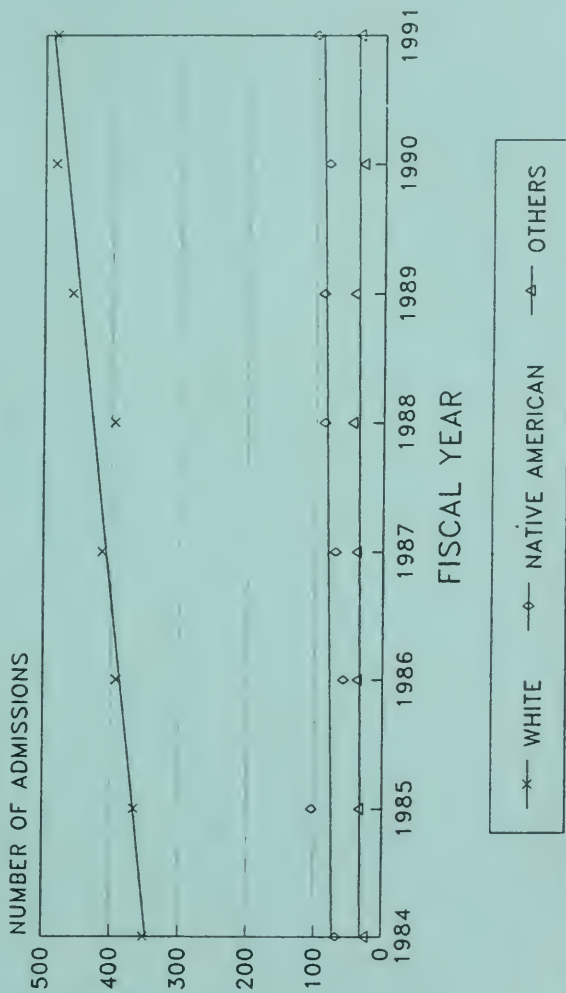
This same relationship did not hold for females.

ADMISSIONS TO PROBATION

No trends over time (1986-1991) were observed in the composition of persons given probation with respect to race and sex.

The number of persons placed on probation has generally increased over time. Like the findings for parolees, the number of males given probation for drug crimes increased by almost 100% between 1986 and 1991. At the same time, there was a decrease in the number of persons placed on parole for violent crimes and combination crimes.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS PROGRAMS NUMBER OF CASES ADMITTED BY RACE



SOURCE: MT DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS
& HUMAN SERVICES

MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL
303 North Roberts
Helena, MT 59620

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